

**PATENT**

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**IN THE ABSTRACT:**

Please replace the abstract with the following replacement abstract:

~~The present invention is directed to a method for starting a node in a clustered computer system. More particularly, the present invention is directed to a method for starting a node by itself, which includes a sponsor node discovery process. In an embodiment, the present invention is directed to enhancing group communications and providing a local state value to indicate whether the node has completed its starting protocol. In another embodiment, the present invention is directed to a method for self-starting a node in a decentralized clustered computer system. Embodiments of the present invention provide methods for automatically starting a node in a clustered computer system. A starting state value may be assigned to the node and a discovery process initiated to find a sponsor node. If a sponsor node is found, the node is joined with the sponsor node in the clustered computer system. If a sponsor node is not found, the node is started as a one-node cluster in the clustered computer system. An active state value is assigned to the node upon inclusion into the clustered computer system.~~